

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are currently pending in the application. Claims 12-14 and 18 are hereby cancelled. New claim 21 is presented for consideration.

The Examiner has objected to the drawings as allegedly not showing subject matter recited in claims 13, 14 and 18. These claims require a central processor at a first location and first and second stations controlled by the central processor at second and third locations that are each remote from the first location. This structure is shown in Fig. 6 and described in the first full paragraph on page 14 of the written description. It is not understood what the alleged problem is. Perhaps, the Examiner has interpreted the designations “first”, “second”, and “third” to have more significance than arbitrary designations. What is intended by this language is that the central processor, shown in Fig. 6, be remote from at least two stations. While the claim language would potentially cover a central processor that is at a first station for controlling two separate and remote stations, the language in claims 13, 14 and 18 is not so limited. In light of this, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings in paragraph 1 of the Action is requested.

Claims 13, 14 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as allegedly failing to comply with the written description requirement. Claim 14 is further rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. Both of these rejections are based upon the same issue to which the drawing objection relates. In light of the clarification above, withdrawal of both rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112 is requested.

Claims 1-6, 10, 11, 15-17, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,772,048, to Leibin et al. (Leibin). Claims 1-11, 16 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,440,108, to Tran et al. (Tran). Claims 1-5, 11, 15-17, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as allegedly

anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,430,470, to Nakajima et al. (Nakajima). Claims 7-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Leibu and Tran.

Reconsideration of rejection of claims 1-11, 15-17, 19 and 20, and favorable consideration of new claim 21 are requested.

Claim 1 has been amended to characterize the first station as comprising a first terminal at which user identification related to an account can be directly input to process the user request for an article. Claim 1 is further amended to characterize the system as comprising a second station, that is similar to the first station. The processing system causes an article to be dispensed to a user at either of the first and second stations in response to a user's inputting of a user's identification related to an account directly at the terminal at either the first or second stations. The processing system is further characterized as comprising a central processor at a first location through which control of each of the first and second stations is coordinated at second and third locations, respectively, that are remote from the first location. The central processor is capable of tracking transactions carried out at the first and second stations from the first location.

Nakajima utilizes a portable communication terminal 10 to communicate with a vending management center which indirectly allows the sale and dispensing of an item through an automatic vending machine 20. Nakajima represents a completely different means of operating a vending machine. Applicant's claimed structure allows the user to directly interact at the vending machine without the need for a portable communication terminal, which may be a radio or wire communication terminal, such as a telephone, or the like.

Neither Tran nor Leibu teaches or suggests coordinated operation of stations that are remote from a central processor. Leibu apparently contemplates having multiple vending

machines at the same location that are coordinated through preferably wireless communication. As explained by Leibu in the last full paragraph in column 3, through the first full paragraph of column 4, through a single credit or payment, the machines at that location can be coordinately utilized. As stated in column 4, after the products are ordered and dispensed, “appropriate change or credit is made” (lines 17 and 18). In line 20 of column 4, it is explained that the user “will be paid back any excess deposited”. The only logical way for this system to work would be for the machines to be coordinated at the same location, whereby a user is given “change” rather than having a running credit for any excess deposit.

Tran is concerned with the dispensing and revaluing of cash cards at a terminal, and does not teach or suggest a coordinated system of stations and a processing system, as recited in amended claim 1.

Claims 2-11 and 15 depends cognately from claim 1 and recite further significant structural detail to further distinguish over the cited art.

Claim 16 has been amended to include limitations corresponding to those added to claim 1. Accordingly, claim 16 is believed allowable.

Claims 17-20 recite further significant method limitations to further distinguish over the prior art.


New claim 20 corresponds to claim 1 with an amendment to characterize the first station as comprising a sensing mechanism that allows a user identification to be made through the detection of an anatomical attribute peculiar to that user.

The prior art does not teach or suggest such a system.

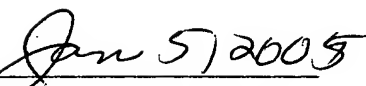
Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1-11, 15-17, 19 and 20, favorable consideration of new claim 21, and allowance of the case are requested. Should additional fees be required in connection with this matter, please charge our deposit account No. 23-0785.

Respectfully Submitted,

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